

"You have all worked very hard to bring this bill to a standard necessary for today's ever evolving service dog world. This is an enormous help to those that live with life altering disabilities to be able to find dignity and independence because of the assistance they receive on so many levels from their service dog. I believe the new language, additions and modifications to the current Michigan statutes will be very welcomed.

Education and raising public awareness now become critical elements to completing the work needed to correct the issues that are disrespectful to service dog teams and confusing to merchants. With that being said, we respectfully suggest that the 30 hours of community service (suggested as a penalty) be assigned to an organization that works specifically with our disabled population. We feel it is imperative to educate the violators by creating an opportunity to understand the daily challenges that a disabled person lives with 24/7. The hope is that they are educated to the law and also learn empathy and respect for those less fortunate.

The only other point I wish to make is that Impostor Dogs must be addressed and I suggest they be penalized in the same manner as suggested in this bill for merchants that disallow a proper service animal. Impostor dogs are a very confusing point to merchants, extremely disrespectful to the disabled individuals who truly need these service animals and it is ILLEGAL.

You have the power to make a profound impact and assist all of your constituents by considering these additions. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill which continues to make Michigan a better place for all of its citizens.

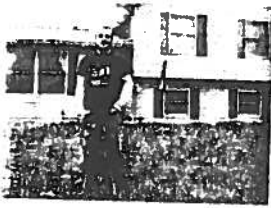
Carol Borden, Founder and Executive Director of Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs, Inc."

Ahern: Veteran, service dog mistreated by airline



Louise Knott Ahern, lkaahern@lsj.com

11:33 a.m. EST December 24, 2014



(Photo: Dave Wasinger/Lansing State Journal)

Columnist Louise Knott Ahern has a soft spot for two things: dogs and veterans. A flight attendant with US Airways messed with both.

US Airways was forced to apologize to an Iraq veteran from Williamston this week for the way some of its flight attendants treated his service dog on a recent trip from Florida to Detroit.

And, of all the veterans to mess with, they chose Eric Calley. He's a former Marine who served two tours in Iraq and now spends civilian life advocating on behalf of other returning veterans.

He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and has struggled through a world of hurt to get where he is today.

The two things that he says rescued him?

His son and his Sun, a golden-haired little boy and a rescued Doberman specially trained to help veterans with PTSD.

Sun is by his side almost every minute, monitoring Calley's heart rate, his breathing, the tension in his muscles.

At any change in his demeanor, Sun will wedge her snout under his arm to calm him or jump into his lap to put warm pressure on his chest.

If he has a nightmare, she wakes him up with a nudge of her cold nose.

"She was rescued," he says, "to rescue me."

Here's what happened.

It was Dec. 7, and a flight attendant from first class walked back to where he was sitting in coach and repeatedly yelled at him because Sun had put her front paws on an empty seat next to him during some turbulence.

There are witnesses, including another local veteran. Chuck Aaron of Charlotte, who also served in Iraq, was sitting behind Calley.

Aaron said he knew the minute he saw the pair that Calley was a fellow veteran and Sun was likely a PTSD service dog.



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[Support floods in for veteran's service dog project](#)

<http://ux.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/2014/12/24/support-floods-veteran-service-dog-project/20855687/>

He said no one on the flight had any problem with Sun putting her paws on the empty seat. But then the flight attendant appeared and "just started going off about how the dog can't be on the seat and you have to get that dog down."

The flight attendant was so rude that a dozen or so other passengers began to stand up for Calley and filed complaints when they landed, Aaron said.

"He started telling us that he was going to have the police waiting when we landed because we were being hostile," Aaron said. "It was blatant disrespect. I couldn't just sit there and not say something."

US Airways sent Calley a letter this week apologizing because "it appears our airport personnel didn't handle the situation with the quality customer care we expect."

In a statement to the Lansing State Journal, the airline's parent company, American Airlines, said it is "actively responding to the matter."

"We sincerely apologize to Mr. Calley for his experience and thank him for his service to our country," the statement said. "American holds the men and
<http://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/2014/12/19/airline-sorry-yelling-service-dog/20644...> 6/2/2015

A spokeswoman, Leslie Scott, also said several airline employees -- many of whom are veterans -- volunteer with a program called Puppies in Flight to acclimate service dogs to flying and are aware of the growing need.

She said she couldn't comment on whether any disciplinary action was taken against the flight attendant in question.

"It has certainly been brought to the attention of leadership and has been followed up on," Scott said.

Calley said the apology is insufficient because the flight attendant's behavior was just one of several ways he was mistreated by the airline during the flight

He said airline employees twice pointed him out to other people as having a medical disability when they were trying to get someone to change seats with him, and he was asked to provide proof that Sun is a service dog

He said he's speaking out about the incident because he hopes it will raise awareness about a bigger problem -- the lack of recognition about the rights and needs of veterans with PTSD.

"We are going to continue to have this huge influx of new veterans coming back," Calley said. "And it can take a veteran four to five years after getting out to even attempt to get help. The thing I want US Airways to understand is that this is going to be a growing problem. There will be 10 others like me."



Eric Calley shows photos from his time serving in Iraq with the Marines. Calley joined the Marines after Sept. 11, 2001. (Photo: Dave Wasinger/Lansing State Journal)

Calley, whose brother is Michigan Lt. Gov. Brian Calley, was part of the first wave of American troops who invaded Iraq in 2003.

It took several years and a lot of struggle to adjust to normal life after he left the Marines, he says. He battled alcoholism to cope with flashbacks and panic attacks.

His first service dog, Liberty, passed away last year of cancer. A fundraiser earlier this year helped him get Sun. She now goes everywhere with him.

"She helps me just leave the house," he said. "She helps me deal with people. Dogs are 10 times more intuitive than humans. They pick up things way more than we do. If you have a flashback, and say you're dreaming you're overseas and you wake up, you still think you're over there for a while. She helps you get out of that. She brings you back to real time."

Calley said that's the other reason he's speaking out about what happened with the airline

He wants people to know there is a two-year waiting list in Michigan for veterans who need service dogs, and that list is going to get longer.

"When you get out of the brotherhood of the military, you start feeling odd," he said. "You don't feel like other people. Having a son made me appreciate life again over the last eight years since I've been out. My son, and my dog."

Louise Knott Ahern is a columnist for the Lansing State Journal.

You can help

Eric Calley works with a program called Liberty's Legacy in honor of Calley's first dog to provide more service dogs for Michigan veterans.

Calley said his goal for 2015 is to bring "as many dogs as possible" to Michigan.

You can help.

Liberty's Legacy works with schools to set up penny drives to raise money for veterans who are waiting for dogs. Literally, Calley says, every penny counts.

If you're interested in setting up a penny drive at your local school to sponsor a Michigan veteran, contact Lansing State Journal columnist Louise Knott Ahern at lkahern@lsj.com. She will put you in touch with Eric Calley.

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 IT'S BROAD WAY AT IT'S BEST.

Veteran: Dispute over service dog led to arrest

Michael Braun, News Press 11:31 p.m. EST March 4, 2015



(Photo: Kin fay Moroti/news-press.com)

A bill making its way through the Florida legislature could help situations like the one Monday night that saw a young veteran arrested at a Bonita Springs hotel after he, his family and his service dog were denied lodging.

Jason White, 34, was arrested at the Best Western hotel in Bonita Springs following a dispute with the hotel manager and staff over Camo, he said.

Carol Borden, with Guardian Angela Medical Service Dogs, which provided the dog to White, said House Bill 71, sponsored by Rep. Jimmie Smith, covers issues like this.

Borden said her non-profit organization has offered advice on the bill that would require public accommodation to permit use of service animal by individuals with disability and revises penalties for those who interfere with use of service animal.

White and his wife Danielle, 30, and their daughter Savannah, 2, had checked into the hotel Monday night, he said.

The family was here to complete training for the 2-year-old German shepherd at a Naples facility. The animal is set to graduate from training Saturday.

Camo was originally trained in a program specifically for veterans with post traumatic stress disorder at St. Matthew's House in Naples and transferred to the Whites on Feb. 13. An official passing of the leash is planned in the fall, Jason White said.

The Wyoming, Mi., veteran received a traumatic brain injury and spinal wounds with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan in 2012 when an 200-pound improvised explosive device detonated near a vehicle he was in. He has been on anxiety medication, he said, and has been helped greatly by Camo

Problems began, White said, after his wife signed for the room and he brought Camo in later and saw nobody at the front desk. Within 2 minutes of entering their room the dog ate something off the floor, White said, and started vomiting, frothing at the mouth and having hallucinations.

When White went to the front desk to seek help, he said manager Vinit "Vinnie" Patel, became irate about the dog and asked the family to leave.

The veteran said he called the sheriff's office and wound up being arrested instead.

He was charged with battery and destruction of property, the sheriff's report said, after he kicked and cracked a television and shoved the hotel manager, Vinnie Patel.

Borden said the hotel's reaction violates the ADA and a complaint would be filed. Borden said what happened to White at the hotel was a "travesty" for an American hero.

The Whites said they are willing to use this incident to educate the public about service dogs. "If nothing else we are hoping to bring education and awareness to this area," Danielle White said.

Added Borden: "This is something we are teaching all the time. A service dog is not considered a pet."

Patel initially declined to comment Wednesday but later in a statement via email, said:

"We comply with all federal, state and local laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We have a long history of accepting service animals. In fact, on the night in question, we had another service animal staying at our hotel, without incident.

"In this situation the guest did not identify that he had a service animal with him upon check-in. We were first made aware of the animal's presence in the guest's room through multiple complaints from other guests regarding the dog's barking," the statement said.

But the Whites disputed that saying Camo did not bark and the manager did not even know the dog was in the hotel until they brought him to the front

Jason White called the Lee County Sheriff's Office when Patel was adamant that the family leave the hotel despite the dog being clearly marked with a black service dog vest.

Deputies spoke with Patel, according to the LCSO report, but Patel told the deputies that other service dogs he has allowed there have come with certificates and that this one had no such paperwork. The report said: "Vinit stated that due to the couple not having a certificate for the dog, he did not believe the dog to actually be a service dog and he did not want them in his hotel."

Borden said that paperwork is not necessary for a service dog under the ADA. "Certificates are not required," she said. "There are only two questions they can ask, 'Is this a service animal?' and 'What is the dog trained to assist you with?' Anything else is a violation of the ADA."

Jason White said that had he the chance to do it over he would restrain himself better and not get rough with the manager.

"I stayed calm until the officers came out and said there was nothing they could do," he said, adding he got upset when he realized the manager was going to force them to leave.

Danielle White said that her husband did well during the 45-minute confrontation. "You could see the hostility," she said of the hotel. The couple have been married five years but have known each other since they were neighbors as children in Michigan.

The Whites said they did not mention Camo upon registering because they have had issues at other hotels after seeing Camo. "We've been denied before," Danielle White said.

Borden also praised the sheriff's office deputies. "They did the right thing. They did tell the hotel management the law. They can only tell then law, they can't arrest them," she said. "It should just never have happened."

After her husband's arrest Danielle White collected the couple's belongings from the hotel room, packed Savannah and Camo and had to find an emergency veterinarian.

She said they spent nearly three hours at Southwest Florida Veterinary Specialists & 24 Hour Emergency Hospital on Bonita Beach Road where Camo was given fluids and got better.

Danielle White said she found another hotel, the Holiday Inn Express in the Forum in Fort Myers which allowed her, Savannah and Camo to stay.

Alexa Hardin, manager at the Holiday Inn Express, said the hotel has policies and procedures in place for this kind of a situation. She added that the hotel does not usually accept pets but that managers are instructed in the ADA.

"They train us for this," she said.

Hardin added that she has been in touch with local businesses such as pet stores and restaurants collecting certificates for the Whites. "I'm sure they spent money they did not plan to," she said.

Additionally she has contacted her corporate office to see what else they can offer the Whites.

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